

Essay- 2016, Turn the Page...2017

It seems the older you get the quicker time flies. This year certainly has done that. I had a retirement countdown clock on my desk I'd stare at every day that ticked off the days, hours, minutes and seconds to retirement. Well that was almost one year ago, *already*. Just a few thoughts on today's essay and some of the things that drifted across my mind in retrospect.

Back in November, I spent a week in Orlando at Swat Round-up International, a 4-day international Swat competition. Teams from all over the US and several international teams make the annual trip to compete in head to head tactical competition for a cache of prizes that has grown to more than a quarter of a million dollars for the first-place team. It has surpassed the original intent of a training event and become a more of a vendor oriented showcase and focus on cashing in on the monetary gain of equipment. Granted there are still a few (very few) old school "war dogs" out there who remember what the original intent was and still live by the code but it is fading with the replacement by the millennial generation of cops.

I've noticed a decline in the comradery among those in attendance as well. This topic was discussed during the week among several of the judges who have been around awhile. The level of "whining" and complaining on mistakes or grievances on procedural violations or penalties during the competition was unbelievable. These young folks have a hard time accepting responsibility or holding themselves accountable for their own actions (**Romans 14:12**).

It wasn't just at Swat Round-up, it's a nationwide issue that's on the news every night. We've seen a great deal of it since the election with all of the protests and those crying over their candidate's loss. Really? Instead of 19-year old's storming the beaches of Normandy, now they need a "safe space" to handle their anxieties over an election result. A pity that true history has been watered down in our schools so that there is no concept of what a hard time some of our citizens have had to endure. It is unimaginable to think that 618,000 people died in our own Civil War (1861-1865)! Most young people are clueless of this war and even who fought in it.

Back in the 60's, society decided it would be prudent to develop kids and their self-esteem. It started in the classroom with a revision in the grading system and in sports. It began with the practice of issuing of participation trophies. Not just

trophies but other awards, certificates and items for “achievement” for basically showing up. While trying to motivate some, it diminished the efforts of those that actually trained and worked hard to win. The concept itself is actually contrary to God’s way (**Prov. 13:11**). Education shifted to indoctrination. Generation X, Y and “why me” soon followed. It isn’t all the fault of one generation as complacency by all of us has contributed. We have become self-centered and out for “number one” (**Prov. 13:10, 1 John 2:16**).

The essay’s term of “Historical Myopia” is fitting as we lack the foresight for what lies ahead and we fail to grasp truth. We can’t see the forest for the trees. As a nation and as people in general, we have taken our focus off of God (**Psalms 53:2-4**). We are too busy looking at our own circumstances whining about our own storms. We have all had our storms this past year. Some more than others but we have all experienced trials (**1 Peter 4:12-19**). I think it would be a safe statement that none of us has had a murder to contend with, no earthquakes, tsunamis, typhoons, floods, we *did* dodge a hurricane, and so on (None of us have endured a scourging and crucifixion either). In researching stats on line, looking at death tolls from wars and natural disasters, you’d be shocked at how many people died this past year. Worldwide, snakebites alone claim over 20,000 lives per year. Okay, so we lucked out on wars, storms and snakebites but what about our personal strife?

Did we bring the storms upon ourselves or are we too busy saying “woe is me” to notice their approach (**Isa. 30:1, Romans 6:16**)? Do we learn from past mistakes or do we try and jog with one foot nailed to the floor (**Jer. 45:3, Hebrews 5:8, 1 Peter 1:1-7**)? It can be difficult to see the road ahead when we constantly look at our feet. Are we walking the “the walk” with God as we should or are we still *playing* church (**1 Kings 8:61, 2 Chron. 6:14**)? Do we learn from our mistakes or keep repeating them (**Proverbs 26:11, 2 Peter 2:22**)? We can also learn from the mistakes of others as it has been said “learn from the mistakes of others as you’ll never live long enough to make them all yourself.” I’ve made every mistake twice just to make sure I did it wrong the first time...

In our walk with God, He has given us an example in His Son Jesus Christ (**1 Peter 2:21**). He has given us His Word in His Holy Bible. One is a Living role model and the other is the instructions on how we can become like His Son (**1 Peter 4:1**). This of course is not easy. Ironing the wrinkles out of a shirt takes a hot iron. Changing ourselves or circumstances can be trying at the least and downright difficult for the most part. Living in a fast food society, everyone wants the change “right now!” Well, change, worthwhile change doesn’t occur overnight. The story

of Joseph beginning in Genesis 37, of how he was thrown into a pit (age 17), sold into slavery and then made the “number two” over all of Egypt right under the Pharaoh (age 30). He never lost sight of his faith and *obedience* to God.

Unfortunately, we do not have this type of patience these days (**Romans 5:2-5, Heb. 10:36, James 1:3**). Dealing with an issue that may have taken years to develop won't go away overnight.

We are on a journey. We will not reach the destination on our own, Christ is bringing the destination with Him when He returns (**Matt. 25:34**). That destination is only open to the obedient who follow the instructions in His Book (**1 Cor. 6:9, 1 Thes. 2:12, 2 Peter 1:10-11, Rev. 14:12**). Citizenship in His Kingdom requires *work* (**Ezek. 20:19, John 14:15**). No one will do it for you (**Eph. 4:20-24**). We need to actively seek God and read His Word and *do what He says* that we may achieve change and gain insight into His truth (**John 16:13**). The clarity of direction and peace that comes with being obedient to God's Commandments will become apparent and we may even avoid some of the storms we so frequently face (**Psalm 25:10, Psalm 34:19-20, Psalm 91:11, Prov. 8:32, Isa. 26:3**).

As baptized children of God, we must look onward to fulfilling our Creator's purpose for our lives. We cannot stay anchored to yesterday with hopes of making tomorrow better. Storms and trials are part of life. Most are God's way of getting through to us to teach us a lesson (**Isa. 48:17-18**). Guess what? If we fail to learn from them, He will bring them back around. He loves us that much. As this year closes, it's okay to reflect on the past, just don't live there. We know what is required of us, so do it. Trust God. We've made a choice and there is only one direction, forward (**Luke 9:62**).

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